3.7 Visual/Aesthetics

The information in this section is based on the *Visual Impact Assessment* (August 2011).

3.7.1 Regulatory Setting

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, establishes that the federal government use all practicable means to ensure all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and *aesthetically* (emphasis added) and culturally pleasing surroundings (42 United States Code [USC] 4331[b][2]). To further emphasize this point, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in its implementation of NEPA (23 USC 109[h]) directs that final decisions on projects are to be made in the best overall public interest taking into account adverse environmental impacts, including among others, the destruction or disruption of aesthetic values.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) establishes that it is the policy of the state to take all action necessary to provide the people of the state "with…enjoyment of *aesthetic*, natural, scenic and historic environmental qualities." (CA Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21001[b]).

3.7.2 Affected Environment

3.7.2.1 Visual Environment

The MCP study area includes or is adjacent to commercial, industrial, agricultural, habitat reserve, residential land uses, and local roads, as well as major highways (i.e., Interstate 215 [I-215] and State Route 79 [SR-79]). The primary viewer groups in the MCP study area are motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, and residents, as well as employees and patrons of commercial land uses.

3.7.2.2 Landscape Units

Landscape units are relatively homogeneous combinations of landform and land cover that recur throughout the region. A landscape unit is a portion of the regional landscape and can be thought of as an outdoor room that exhibits a distinct visual character. A landscape unit will often correspond to a place or district that is commonly known among local viewers. Landscape units were identified throughout the MCP study area and are listed below and shown in Figure 3.7.1.

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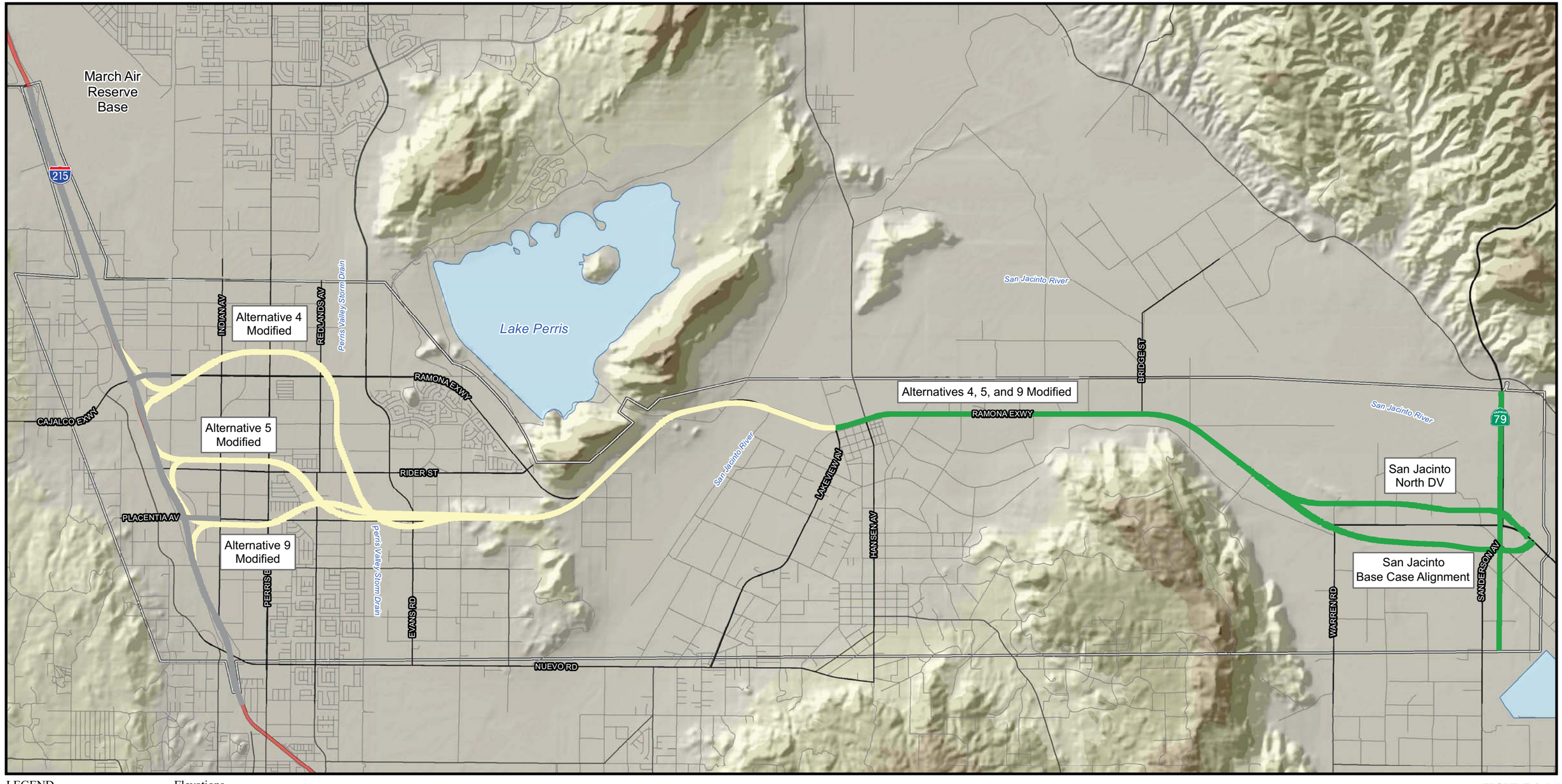

LEGEND

- Study Area

Landscape Units

- Existing Freeway
- Perris Valley
- San Jacinto Valley

Elevations

Under 1,280 ft
1,280 to 1,600 ft
1,600 ft to 1,920 ft
1,920 ft to 2,240 ft
2,240 ft to 2,560 ft
2,560 ft to 2,880 ft
Over 2,880 ft

SOURCE: Jacobs Engineering (02/2011); Thomas Brothers (2010); Eagle Aerial (03/2010)

0 0.5 1 Miles

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FIGURE 3.7.1

Elevations and Landscape Units

08-RIV-MCP PM 0.0/16.3; 08-RIV-215 PM 28.0/34.3
EA 08-0F3200 (PN 0800000125)

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Perris Valley Landscape Unit

The Perris Valley Landscape Unit is located between I-215 and Lakeview Avenue. Geologically, Perris Valley is an approximately 4.5-mile (mi) wide alluvial-filled basin that extends from Moreno Valley on the north to Menifee Valley on the south. This unit includes views of the Bernasconi Hills, a distinguishing topographical feature in the northeastern portion of the valley located within the Lake Perris State Recreation Area. The Bernasconi Hills separate Perris Valley from the San Jacinto Valley. Perris Valley includes considerable residential and commercial development, roads, and associated traffic. The elevations in this landscape unit range from approximately 1,420 to 2,450 feet (ft).

San Jacinto Valley Landscape Unit

Farmlands, fields, the Ramona Expressway, and rural residential land uses characterize the San Jacinto Valley Landscape Unit between Lakeview Avenue and SR-79. The rural residential land uses are located both north and south of the Ramona Expressway. Mountains are visible to the northeast (the San Jacinto Mountains) and the south (the Lakeview Mountains). Elevations in this landscape unit range from approximately 1,420 to 1,480 ft; thus, the unit is relatively flat. The San Jacinto River floodplain is located within a northeast-trending valley between Perris Valley and the San Jacinto Valley, bordered by the Bernasconi Hills on the west and the Lakeview Mountains on the southeast. The San Jacinto River flows toward the Elsinore Valley, approximately 20 mi to the southwest. The San Jacinto Valley is an alluvial valley along the northwest-trending San Jacinto fault zone.

Freeway Landscape Unit

The I-215 freeway within the MCP study area represents the Freeway Landscape Unit. I-215 is a north-south direction highway and is relatively straight within the MCP study area. I-215 in the MCP study area is bounded by Mead Valley on the west and Perris Valley on the east. Heavy traffic flow, interchanges, and surrounding commercial and residential development characterize the I-215 Freeway Landscape Unit.

3.7.2.3 Topography

The topography in the MCP study area includes flat lands, hills, and mountains. Topography in the project area is diverse, with rolling hills in the west that transition to flat, open, ruderal, and agricultural lands in the San Jacinto Valley in the east. The elevation generally decreases from west to east, from approximately 1,500 ft near I-215 to approximately 1,470 ft above mean sea level near SR-79. There are several

peaks, up to approximately 2,400 ft above mean sea level, within the project area. Elevations in the MCP project area are also shown in Figure 3.7.1.

3.7.2.4 Plant Communities

Portions of the MCP study area contain plant communities and are absent of man-made structures. The locations and types of plants in a viewshed generally contribute to its visual character. The predominant plant communities in the MCP study area are nonnative grassland and Riversidean upland sage scrub. There are also extensive areas of agricultural land and developed land. Plant communities and other land cover categories in the MCP study area are described in more detail in Section 3.17, Natural Communities.

3.7.2.5 Effects of Weather and Air Pollution

Precipitation and temperature affect the appearance of the landscape units in the MCP study area. From December to May, plants are usually greener than from June to November. Summer months are typically dry and produce landscape palettes of browns and tans, while winter months tend to provide enough precipitation to trigger plant growth, turning the landscape green. The MCP study area photographs used in the *Visual Impact Assessment* were taken in wet and dry seasons to show how the landscapes are influenced by the amount of precipitation.

The visual quality in western Riverside County is sometimes degraded by the presence of smog. Smog is ozone (O_3) and ground-level pollutants that produce a haze. The human environment, weather conditions, and topography influence the presence and severity of smog. Smog in western Riverside County is typically more visible during the warmer, dryer summer and fall months than in winter and spring. The photographs in this section display various air quality conditions.

3.7.2.6 Methodology

This section summarizes the methodology and terminology used to assess visual impacts of the MCP Build Alternatives. More details on the methodology are available in the *Visual Impact Assessment*. The visual impact analysis followed the methodology prescribed in the publication *Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects* (FHWA, August 1981). The following six principal steps were carried out to assess the visual impacts of the proposed MCP Build Alternatives:

1. Define the existing visual environment.
2. Identify key views for visual assessment.

3. Analyze existing visual resources (visual quality and visual character) and viewer groups.
4. Depict the visual appearance of project alternatives and viewer response.
5. Assess the visual impacts of project alternatives.
6. Propose methods to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate adverse visual impacts.

The visual impacts of the MCP Build Alternatives were determined by assessing the existing visual resources, the visual resource changes due to the project, and predicting viewer responses to those changes. The degree of visual quality in a view was evaluated using the following FHWA descriptive terms:

- **Vividness:** Vividness is the visual power or memorability of landscape components as they combine in striking and distinctive visual patterns (e.g., Niagara Falls is a highly vivid landscape component).
- **Intactness:** Intactness is the visual integrity of the natural and human-built landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements. This factor can be present in well-kept urban and rural landscapes and natural settings (e.g., a two-lane road that meanders through the countryside).
- **Unity:** Unity is the visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape considered as a whole; it frequently attests to the careful design of individual components in the landscape (e.g., an English or Japanese garden).

The levels of visual impact are described as follows:

- **Low:** Minor adverse change to the existing visual resource with low viewer response to a change in the visual environment.
- **Moderate:** Moderate adverse change to the visual resource with moderate viewer response.
- **Moderately High:** Moderate adverse visual resource change with high viewer response or high adverse visual resource change with moderate viewer response.
- **High:** Excessive adverse visual change to the resource or a high level of viewer response to visual change such that architectural design and landscape treatment cannot mitigate the impacts. Viewer response level is high.

3.7.2.7 Key Views

To evaluate the visual effects of the MCP Build Alternatives, specific views were selected that represent the various landscape units throughout the MCP study area, the

visual resources, and a number of sensitive viewer perspectives. Selection of the key views was based on the following criteria:

1. Areas that would have the most substantial changes from project implementation, such as elevated highway structures, sound walls, retaining walls, system or service interchanges, and areas with large cut-and-fill slopes.
2. Areas where there are existing visual aesthetic resources, such as:
    - Existing visual resources according to the General Plans of the County of Riverside and the Cities of Perris and San Jacinto
    - Scenic vistas
    - Scenic Roads. There are no designated state, county, or locally designated scenic roads in the MCP study area.
3. Populated areas with consideration of residential land uses, in particular.
4. Representative views from each proposed MCP Build Alternative.

Key views represent the primary viewer groups (residents, motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists) that could be affected by the project. Fourteen key views were selected to represent the visual quality of typical existing landscape units in the MCP study area that would be modified by the MCP project, and visual simulations were prepared for all of these key views. Table 3.7.A provides a list of the key views, as well as a brief description of the photo location and view, and the alternatives that would be shown in each visual simulation. Figure 3.7.2 shows the locations of these key views. Note that Key Views 1-15 cover the area between I-15 and I-215 that is no longer under consideration for the MCP project as a result of RCTC's action in 2009 to modify the project limits (refer to Chapter 1 for additional detail). The figures provided in this section for each Key View show both the existing and the proposed views.

Key View 16

The existing setting for Key View 16 is shown in Figure 3.7.3. The key view photograph was taken from I-215 traveling north, just south of the Cajalco Road/Ramona Expressway exit. The existing view is given a low visual quality rating of 2.3 because there are little or no pleasing visual features in the view. Motorists on I-215 see various industrial and commercial land uses interspersed with vacant lots (planned for future development) that typically have some trash and weeds.

Table 3.7.A Key View Summary

Key View Number	Description of Photo Location and View	Alternative(s) Shown in View Simulation
16	Northbound I-215 looking toward the Cajalco/Ramona overcrossing	4 Modified
17	Behind Val Verde Elementary School on Indian Avenue looking north-northwest at I-215	9 Modified
18	South of Paragon Park on Spectacular Bid Street looking north	9 Modified
19	Eastern terminus of Ensenada Drive looking southeast at open space	5 Modified and 9 Modified
20	Perris Boulevard, north of Ramona Expressway looking north at proposed Perris Boulevard Interchange	4 Modified
21	Ramona Expressway looking south at Perris Storm Drain	4 Modified
22	Looking west at the Perris Storm Drain and residential construction	4 Modified
23b	Evans Road looking south at Placentia Avenue	All Build Alternatives
24	Looking west at Ramona Expressway from open fields (area of proposed residential development)	All Build Alternatives
25	South of Ramona Expressway near Bernasconi Road looking west at open fields and Bernasconi Hills	All Build Alternatives
26	Davis Road looking southwest at Ramona Expressway	All Build Alternatives
27	Ramona Expressway looking east at planned Town Center Boulevard	All Build Alternatives
28	Warren Road looking north at Ramona Expressway	All Build Alternatives
29	SR-79 looking south at Ramona Expressway	All Build Alternatives

Source: *Visual Impact Assessment,* August 2011.
Note: Key Views 1 through 15 are no longer applicable to the MCP project (i.e., these key views were located between I-15 and I-215); however, the original numbering system was maintained for project consistency purposes.
I-215 = Interstate 215
SR-79 = State Route 79

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LEGEND

- Study Area
- Right-of-Way (All Alternatives)

Interchanges (All Alternatives)

- Service
- System

- Key View Locations
- Parks
- County Eligible Scenic Highway

FIGURE 3.7.2

SOURCE: Jacobs Engineering (03/2011); Thomas Brothers (2010); Eagle Aerial (03/2010)

0 0.5 1 Miles

Key View Locations

08-RIV-MCP PM 0.0/16.3; 08-RIV-215 PM 28.0/34.3
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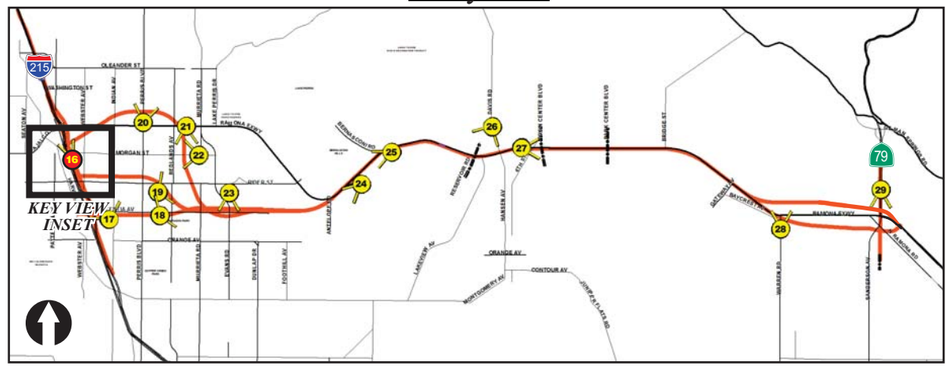
Study Area



Key View Location

Legend

- Key View Location
- Mid County Parkway Proposed Right of Way

Existing Conditions: Northbound I-215 looking toward the Cajalco/Ramona exit and overcrossing

Visual Simulation: MCP Alternative 4 Modified

Figure 3.7.3

Simulations: Softmirage, 2006

Mid County Parkway Visual Impact Assessment
Key View 16
08-RIV-MCP PM 0.0/16.3; 08-RIV-215 PM 28.0/34.3
EA 08-0F3200 (PN 0800000125)

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Motorists on I-215 are the primary viewer group in this key view. The overall level of viewer exposure is low to moderate because while there are a high number of viewers as a result of high traffic volumes on I-215 and the view is within the project limits, the viewer activity of driving is rated low and the duration of the view is low due to high freeway speeds. Viewer sensitivity for motorists on I-215 is considered low since this type of view is typical along a busy interstate highway. There is no known local or cultural significance to this view.

Key View 17

The existing setting for Key View 17 is shown in Figure 3.7.4. The key view photograph was taken from behind Val Verde Elementary School (located on Indian Avenue) in the city of Perris. The view faces north-northwest toward I-215 and Placentia Avenue. The existing visual character in this key view and the surrounding area is transitioning from rural to urban land uses. The existing view has a moderately low visual quality rating of 3.0. The canopied picnic area is a man-made feature in the view. The asphalt, chain-link fence, and I-215 in the background encroach upon the intactness of the view. Key View 17 is not a scenic view, but it is viewed from a sensitive land use (the school).

School children, school employees, and people dropping off children are exposed to this view. The overall level of viewer exposure is low to moderate. Viewer sensitivity is considered high due to the type of viewers (school children, school staff, and parents) and their proximity to the proposed MCP right of way.

Key View 18

The existing setting for Key View 18 is shown in Figure 3.7.5. Key View 18 faces north-northwest toward Paragon Park from Spectacular Bid Street and Chant Street in the city of Perris. The visual character for Key View 18 is suburban. The existing visual quality of this view is rated 5.0, moderately high, with all the features rated the same. The view is of a community park (Paragon Park) from a residential street. The key features in the view include the large grassy areas, trees, and distant mountains. Handball courts, tennis courts, and a fire station are also part of this view. The intactness of this view is hindered slightly by the parking areas and the street sign. The unity is also rated moderately high because the components in the view (i.e., the grass and trees) complement one another to create a harmonious scene typical of a suburban park.

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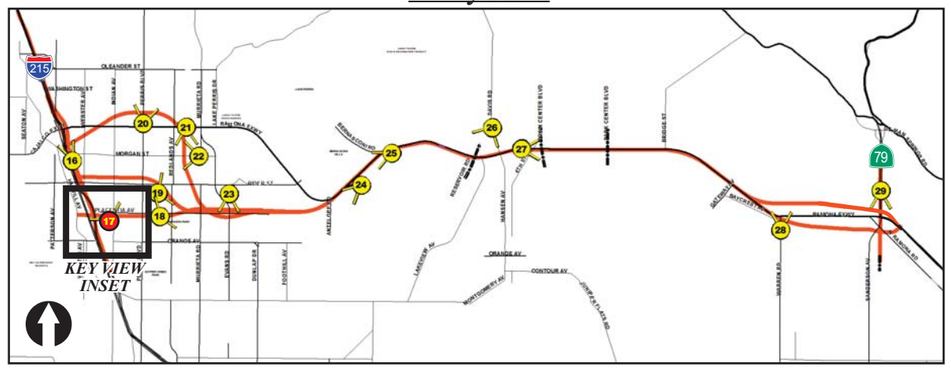
Study Area



Key View Location

Legend

Key View Location

Mid County Parkway
Proposed Right of Way

Existing Conditions: Behind Val Verde Elementary School on Indian Avenue looking northwest and north toward I-215 and Placentia Avenue

Visual Simulation: MCP Alternative 9 Modified

Figure 3.7.4

Simulations: Softmirage, 2006

Mid County Parkway Visual Impact Assessment
Key View 17
08-RIV-MCP PM 0.0/16.3; 08-RIV-215 PM 28.0/34.3
EA 08-0F3200 (PN 0800000125)

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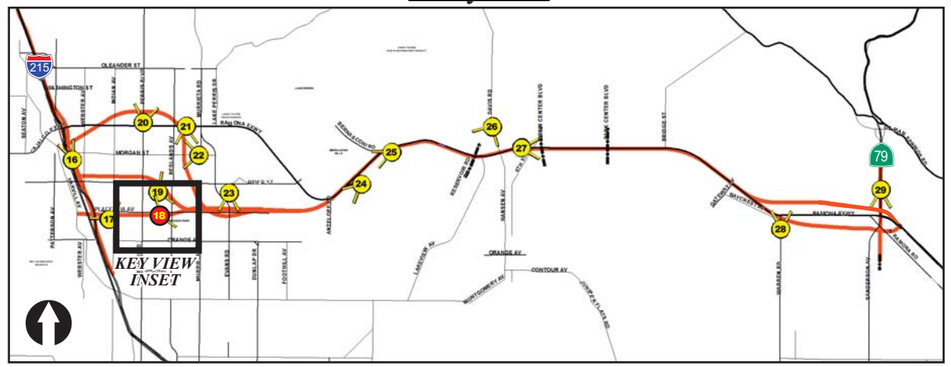

Key View Location

Legend

- Key View Location
- Mid County Parkway Proposed Right of Way

Existing Conditions: Looking north-northwest at Paragon Park from Spectacular Bid

Visual Simulation: MCP Alternative 9 Modified (MCP is depressed below existing ground level at this location, on the other side of Placentia Avenue)

Figure 3.7.5

Simulations: Softmirage, 2006, LSA 2011

Mid County Parkway Visual Impact Assessment
Key View 18
08-RIV-MCP PM 0.0/16.3; 08-RIV-215 PM 28.0/34.3
EA 08-0F3200 (PN 0800000125)

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Residents and park users are the primary viewer groups at this key view. The viewing duration is relatively short for park users and is permanent for some residents. Viewer exposure level is moderate. Because the view includes a park, viewer sensitivity is high.

Key View 19

The existing setting for Key View 19 is shown in Figure 3.7.6. The photograph was taken from the eastern terminus of Ensenada Drive in the city of Perris. The view faces northeast. The existing view is given a moderate visual quality rating of 4.0. The open field in the foreground and the Bernasconi Hills in the background are the pleasing visual features in this view. The dirt road and concrete structure with graffiti encroach upon the intactness of the view. Since the photograph was taken in 2006, this area has been graded for residential development.

Residents are the viewer group for Key View 19. The level of viewer exposure is high. Key View 19 is in a developing suburban area. Viewer sensitivity is high because of high activity and awareness.

Key View 20

The existing setting for Key View 20 is shown in Figure 3.7.7. The Key View 20 photograph is taken from Perris Boulevard facing north approximately 500 ft north of existing Ramona Expressway in the city of Perris. The existing visual quality of this view is rated moderately low (2.8) and the vividness, intactness, and unity are also rated low to moderately low. The view is of a semirural road where the existing land uses transition from commercial (at Ramona Expressway) to residential and agricultural fields as one travels north on Perris Boulevard. The vividness or positive visual features in the view include some farmland and distant mountains with some vehicles visible along Perris Boulevard. The intactness of this view is reduced by traffic, utility poles, and wires. The unity is rated moderately low because there are several elements in the view such as the road, homes, and fields.

Motorists are the primary viewer group at Key View 20. The viewing duration is relatively short. Viewer exposure level is low to moderate summarized as follows: there would be hundreds of motorists per day so the number of viewers is rated moderate; the viewer activity is driving and is rated low; the duration of the view is short and is rated low; and the viewpoint is within the project limits, and the distance from view is rated high.

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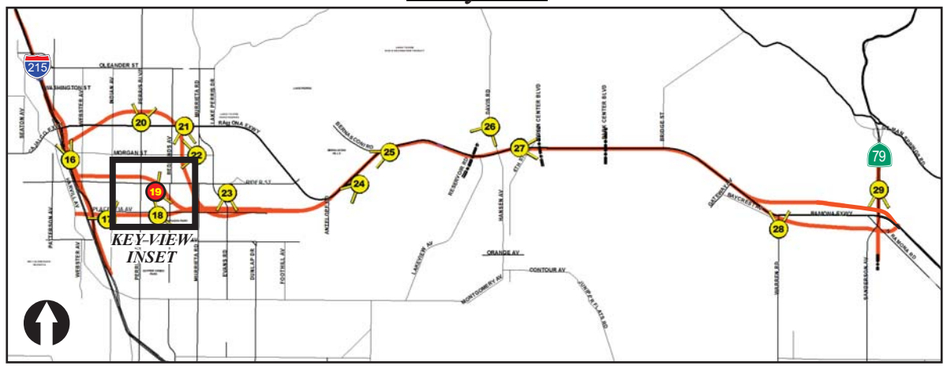
Study Area



Key View Location

Legend

Key View Location

Mid County Parkway Proposed Right of Way

Existing Conditions: Eastern end of Ensenada Drive looking northeast

Visual Simulation: MCP Alternatives 5 Modified and 9 Modified

Figure 3.7.6

Simulations: Softmirage, 2006

Mid County Parkway Visual Impact Assessment
Key View 19
08-RIV-MCP PM 0.0/16.3; 08-RIV-215 PM 28.0/34.3
EA 08-0F3200 (PN 0800000125)

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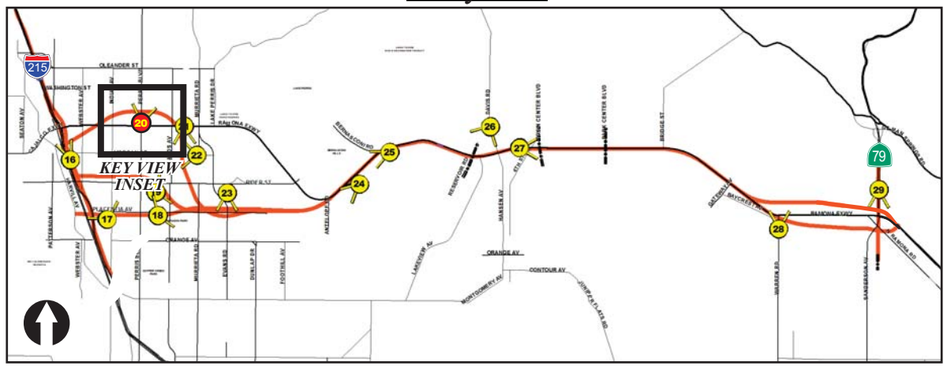
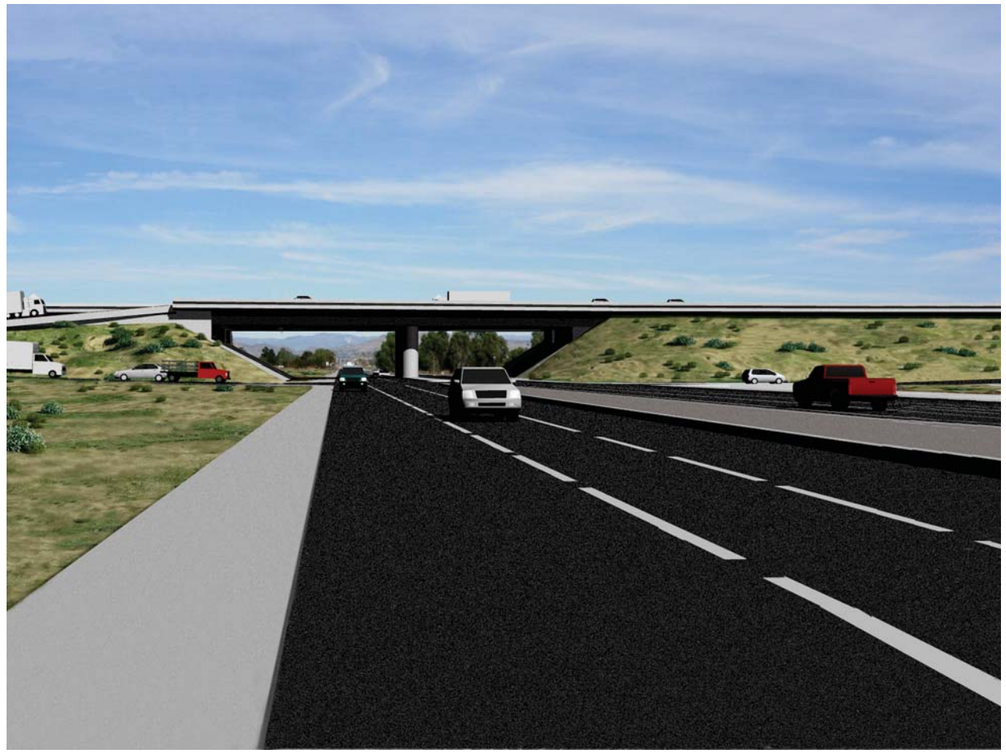


Key View Location

Legend

- Key View Location
- Mid County Parkway Proposed Right of Way

Existing Conditions: Perris Boulevard, north of Ramona Expressway looking north



Visual Simulation: MCP Alternative 4 Modified looking north at proposed Perris Boulevard Interchange

Figure 3.7.7

Simulations: Softmirage, 2006

Mid County Parkway Visual Impact Assessment
Key View 20
08-RIV-MCP PM 0.0/16.3; 08-RIV-215 PM 28.0/34.3
EA 08-0F3200 (PN 0800000125)

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Key View 21

The existing visual setting for Key View 21 is shown on Figure 3.7.8. Key View 21 is a south-facing view of the Perris Valley storm drain and vicinity from the Ramona Expressway. The existing visual quality of this view is given a moderately low rating of 3.3, mostly due to the lack of aesthetic features or distinct composition. The vividness of this view is enhanced by some vegetation in the storm drain channel and the open fields, with a slightly visible cluster of trees and mountains on the horizon. The intactness of this view is also considered moderately low due to the presence of the disturbed area (residential construction), orange construction fencing east of the storm drain, and the unpaved road that runs parallel to the channel. The overall unity of this view is moderate as the channel and unpaved road form a linear pattern that contrasts with the horizon.

Motorists traveling west and east on Ramona Expressway are the primary viewer group for this key view, as well as the residents in homes along the Perris Valley storm drain. The overall level of viewer exposure is moderate and can be summarized as follows: the number of viewers would be thousands of motorists per day and hundreds of future residents and is rated moderate to high; the activity of the viewers is driving, rated low, and residents, rated high; the duration of the view is less than 1 minute while traveling along Ramona Expressway and is rated low, and the duration is rated high for permanent future residents.

Key View 22

The existing visual setting for Key View 22 is shown in Figure 3.7.9. The photograph for Key View 22 faces west toward the Perris Valley storm drain and a residential construction site. Since the photograph was taken in 2006, Morgan Street Park has been constructed in the northern portion of the foreground of Key View 22. The existing visual quality of this view is given a moderate rating of 3.6. The view includes a community park (Morgan Street Park) in the foreground. The vividness or positive visual features in the view include the large grassy areas, trees, sports fields, playground equipment, and distant mountains. However, the intactness of this view is reduced by the construction site in the southern portion of the view. The unity is rated moderate because while the view includes the park, manmade encroachments, such as the construction site and utility poles and wires, reduce the unity of the view by adding nonaesthetic visual elements.

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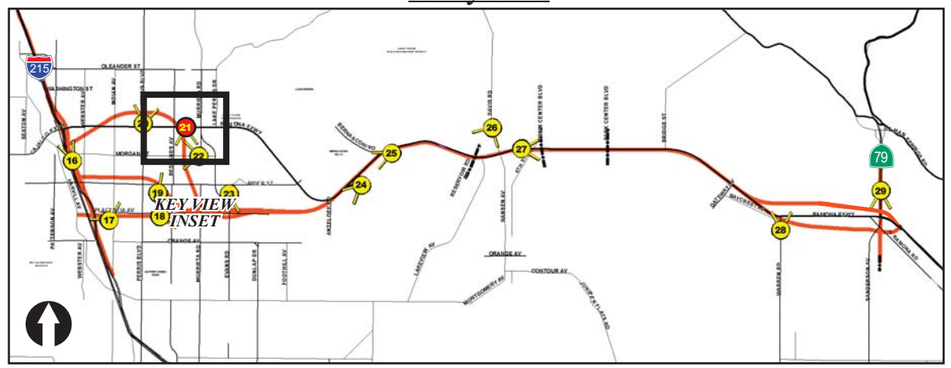
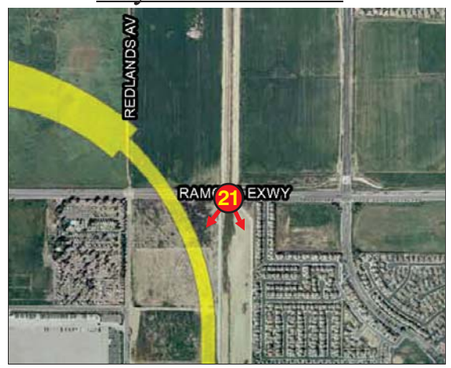
Study Area



Key View Location



Legend

- Key View Location
- Mid County Parkway Proposed Right of Way

Existing Conditions: Ramona Expressway looking south at Perris Valley Storm Drain

Visual Simulation: MCP Alternative 4 Modified

Figure 3.7.8

Simulations: Softmirage, 2006

Mid County Parkway Visual Impact Assessment
Key View 21
08-RIV-MCP PM 0.0/16.3; 08-RIV-215 PM 28.0/34.3
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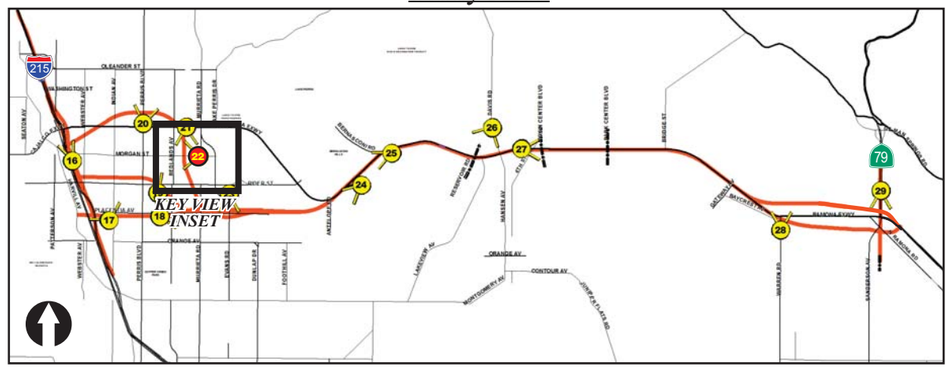
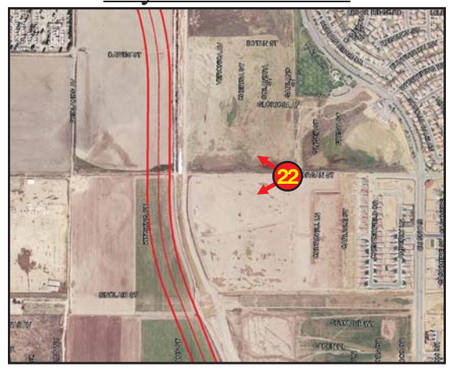
Study Area



Key View Location



Legend

- Key View Location
- Mid County Parkway Proposed Right of Way

Existing Conditions: Looking west from residential development (under construction) located at Morgan Street

Visual Simulation: MCP Alternative 4 Modified

Figure 3.7.9

Simulations: Softmirage, 2006

Mid County Parkway Visual Impact Assessment
Key View 22
08-RIV-MCP PM 0.0/16.3; 08-RIV-215 PM 28.0/34.3
EA 08-0F3200 (PN 0800000125)

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The viewer group is the future residents who will live in the area once the residential construction is completed (but prior to construction of the MCP). The overall level of viewer exposure would be high. The viewer sensitivity is also high due to the proximity (as little as 50 ft) of the future residential units to the proposed MCP project.

Key View 23B

The existing visual setting for Key View 23B is shown in Figure 3.7.10. The photograph for Key View 23B is south-facing from Old Evans Road as it leads into Placentia Avenue. The existing visual character is semirural. The existing visual quality of this view is rated 3.0, moderately low. The vividness of this view is derived from the large cluster of trees and strips of vegetation located on both sides of Placentia Avenue. The intactness of this view is considered moderately low due to the presence of utility poles, the dirt road, and the construction site on the west side of Evans Road. The overall unity of this view is moderately low due to the lack of harmonious patterns between the man-made and natural elements.

The viewer groups are motorists and residents. The overall level of viewer exposure is moderate. Viewer activity and awareness are moderate for local drivers and high for residents, thereby making viewer sensitivity moderate for drivers, particularly local residents, and high for any residents who would have views of the new interchange and widened local streets.

Key View 24

The existing visual setting for Key View 24 is shown on Figure 3.7.11. The photograph for Key View 24 is a southwest-facing view of the Ramona Expressway from the fields, which is land approved for residential development. The existing visual character is rural farmland. The existing visual quality is rated 4.0 (moderate). The vividness of this view is enhanced by the grassland vegetation and the McCanna Hills in the background (approximately 1 mi from the viewpoint). The intactness of this view is moderate due to the presence of the utility poles lining Ramona Expressway. The unity rating is also moderate because the view consists of flat grassland surfaces that are balanced by the contrasting hills in the horizon.

The viewer group is currently farmworkers. Future viewers in the area include residents of houses that will be built prior to the construction of the MCP project. The overall level of viewer exposure is currently low for farmworkers but potentially moderate for the future residents. The current activity and awareness of Key

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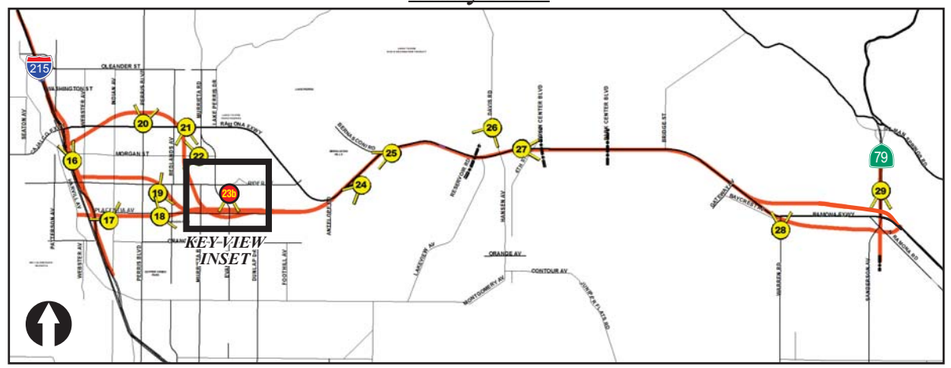
Study Area



Key View Location

Legend

- Key View Location
- Mid County Parkway Proposed Right of Way

Existing Conditions: Old Evans Road looking south at Placentia Avenue

Visual Simulation: All MCP Build Alternatives (Evans Road interchange)

Figure 3.7.10

Simulations: Softmirage, 2006

Mid County Parkway Visual Impact Assessment
Key View 23b
08-RIV-MCP PM 0.0/16.3; 08-RIV-215 PM 28.0/34.3
EA 08-0F3200 (PN 0800000125)

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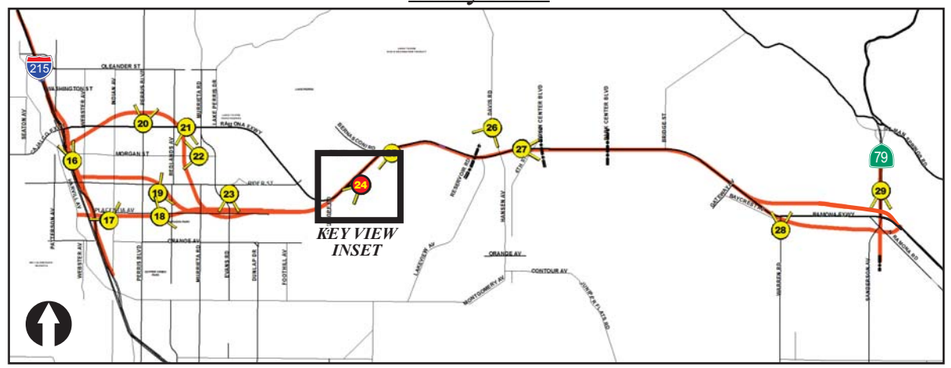

Key View Location

Legend

Key View Location

Mid County Parkway Proposed Right of Way

Existing Conditions: Looking west at Ramona Expressway from a proposed residential development area

Visual Simulation: All MCP Build Alternatives

Figure 3.7.11

Simulations: Softmirage, 2006

Mid County Parkway Visual Impact Assessment
Key View 24
08-RIV-MCP PM 0.0/16.3; 08-RIV-215 PM 28.0/34.3
EA 08-0F3200 (PN 0800000125)

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View 24 are low. Because the area is planned for residential development, future activity and awareness will be high. Viewer sensitivity will increase as residents move into the area.

Key View 25

The existing visual setting for Key View 25 is shown on Figure 3.7.12. The photograph for Key View 25 is a southwest-facing view of fields and the Bernasconi Hills from south of Ramona Expressway in an area approved for residential development. The existing visual character is rural farmland. The existing visual quality of this view is rated 4.0 (moderate) due to the aesthetically pleasing character of the landscape. The vividness of this view is defined by the green fields in the foreground and the hills in the background. The intactness of this view is moderate, reduced by the visible utility poles that traverse the middle of the photo and the visibility of Ramona Expressway. The overall harmony of this view results in a moderate unity rating.

The viewer group is currently farmworkers. Future viewers in the area include residents of houses that will be built prior to the construction of the MCP project and trail users. The overall level of viewer exposure is currently low for farmworkers but potentially moderate for the future residents and trail users. The current activity and awareness of Key View 25 are low. However, because the area is planned for residential development and recreation use, future activity and awareness will be high. Viewer sensitivity will increase as residents move into the area.

Key View 26

The existing visual setting for Key View 26 is shown in Figure 3.7.13. The photograph for Key View 26 is a southwest-facing view of Ramona Expressway from Davis Road. The existing visual character is rural farmland. The existing visual quality of this view is rated 5.0 (moderately high) because the natural landscape creates an aesthetically pleasant composition. The vividness of this view is moderate due to the presence of the fields in the foreground, as well as the cluster of trees and mountains in the background. There are no visible man-made encroachments; therefore, the intactness of the view is also rated moderate. The overall unity of this view is moderate. The mountains create a pleasant contrast to the fields, while the cluster of trees enhances the natural setting of this landscape.

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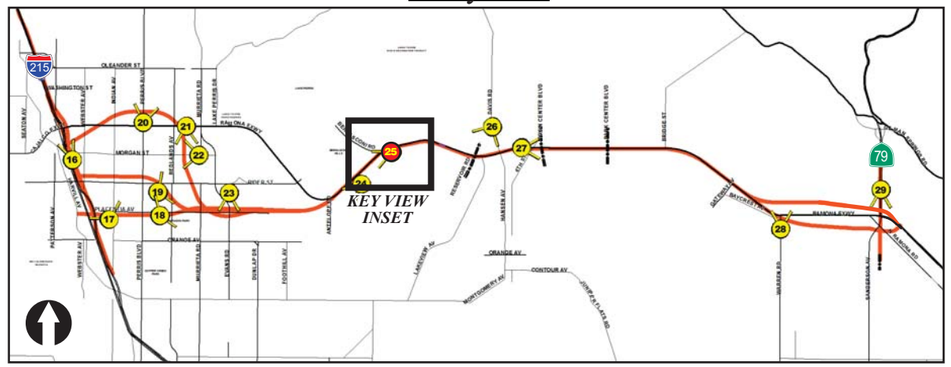

Key View Location

Legend

- Key View Location
- Mid County Parkway Proposed Right of Way

Existing Conditions: Looking west from Ramona Expressway from approved residential development site

Visual Simulation: All MCP Build Alternatives

Figure 3.7.12

Simulations: Softmirage, 2006

Mid County Parkway Visual Impact Assessment
Key View 25
08-RIV-MCP PM 0.0/16.3; 08-RIV-215 PM 28.0/34.3
EA 08-0F3200 (PN 0800000125)

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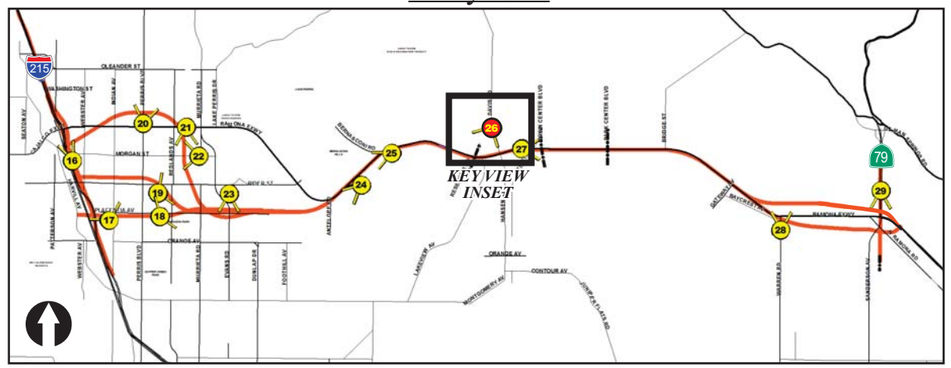
Study Area



Key View Location

Legend

- Key View Location
- Mid County Parkway Proposed Right of Way

Existing Conditions: Davis Road, at a proposed residential development site, looking southwest toward Ramona Expressway

Visual Simulation: All MCP Build Alternatives

Figure 3.7.13

Simulations: Softmirage, 2006

Mid County Parkway Visual Impact Assessment
Key View 26
08-RIV-MCP PM 0.0/16.3; 08-RIV-215 PM 28.0/34.3
EA 08-0F3200 (PN 0800000125)

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The viewer group is currently farmworkers. Future viewers in the area would be residents of houses that are proposed for construction and trails users. The overall level of viewer exposure is currently low for farmworkers but potentially moderate for the future residents and trail users. The current activity and awareness of Key View 26 are low. However, because the area is proposed for residential development, future activity and awareness will be high. Viewer sensitivity will increase as residents move into the area.

Key View 27

The existing visual setting for Key View 27 is shown in Figure 3.7.14. The photograph for Key View 27 is an east-facing view from Ramona Expressway at planned Town Center Boulevard. The existing visual character is rural farmland. The existing visual quality of this view is rated 3.2 (moderately low) due to its proximity to an existing road. The vividness of this view consists of the mountains and cluster of trees in the background. The intactness in this view is moderately low due to the presence of the utility poles on the south side of Ramona Expressway. The unity is rated slightly higher than the other features because the view is mainly of a highway, which is a consistent feature in this view.

The viewer group includes existing motorists traveling on Ramona Expressway and future motorists traveling on the MCP. The overall level of viewer exposure is moderate. The viewer sensitivity is moderate. Existing motorists travel through an area that is currently agricultural but that is expected to undergo substantial development in the next 20 to 30 years.

Key View 28

The existing setting for Key View 28 is shown in Figure 3.7.15. Key View 28 faces north toward the Ramona Expressway from Warren Road in the city of San Jacinto. The visual character for Key View 28 is semirural. The existing visual quality of this view is rated 2.0 (low). Warren Road is the central component in this view. The key visual features in the view are the farmland, the house, and the mountains in the distance.

The intactness of this view is encroached upon by trash on the side of Warren Road, street signs, and utility poles and wires. The unity is also rated low because there is little or no compositional harmony to the view.

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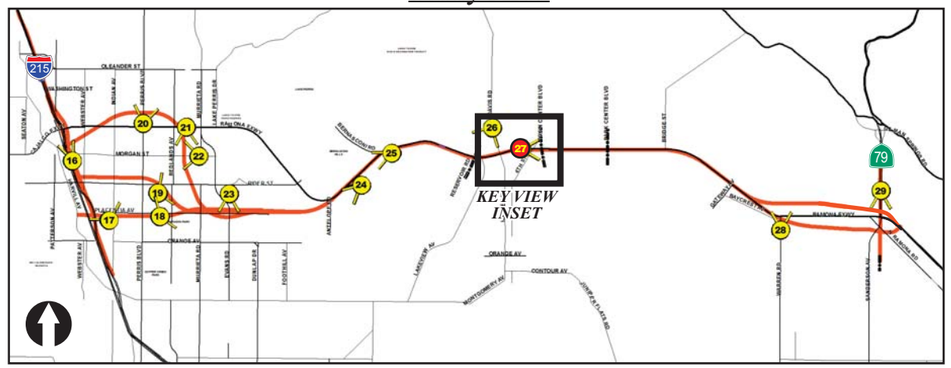

Key View Location

Legend

- Key View Location
- Mid County Parkway Proposed Right of Way

Existing Conditions: Ramona Expressway facing east

Visual Simulation: All MCP Build Alternatives with planned Town Center Boulevard interchange

Figure 3.7.14

Simulations: Softmirage, 2006

Mid County Parkway Visual Impact Assessment
Key View 27
08-RIV-MCP PM 0.0/16.3; 08-RIV-215 PM 28.0/34.3
EA 08-0F3200 (PN 0800000125)

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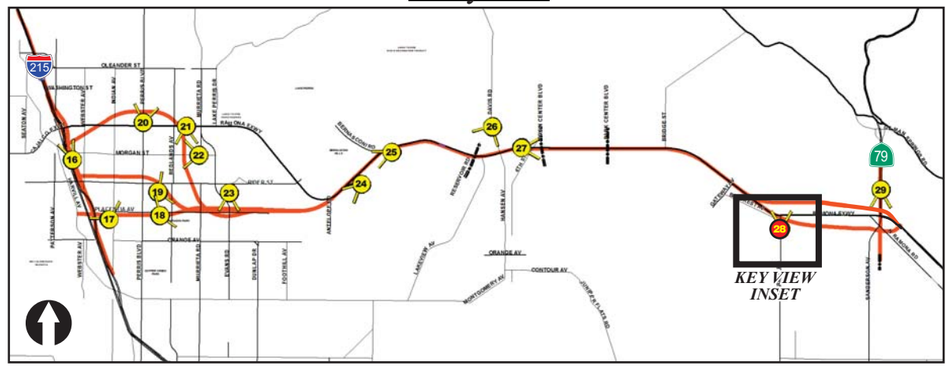
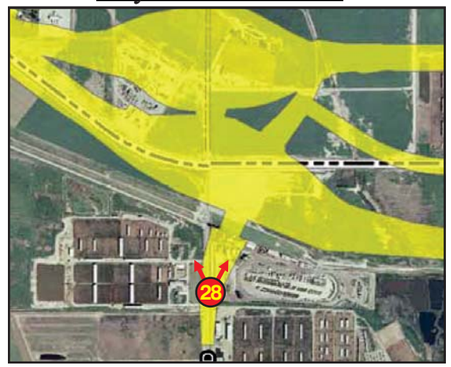


Key View Location



Legend

- Key View Location
- Mid County Parkway Proposed Right of Way

Existing Conditions: Warren Road looking north at Ramona Expressway

Visual Simulation: All MCP Build Alternatives with the San Jacinto South alignment

Figure 3.7.15

Simulations: Softmirage, 2006

Mid County Parkway Visual Impact Assessment
Key View 28
08-RIV-MCP PM 0.0/16.3; 08-RIV-215 PM 28.0/34.3
EA 08-0F3200 (PN 0800000125)

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Local drivers are the primary viewer groups at this key view. Futures users could be bicyclists should Warren Road be constructed as a Class 2 bikeway per the City of San Jacinto General Plan, Trail Opportunities Map. The viewing duration is short, viewer exposure level is low, and the view does not have high activity. Therefore, viewer sensitivity is low.

Key View 29

The existing setting for Key View 29 is shown in Figure 3.7.16. The photograph for Key View 29 is a south-facing view from SR-79 toward its intersection with the Ramona Expressway. The existing visual quality of this view is rated 2.8 (moderately low) because viewers mostly see the road, agricultural fields, and a very distant view of the mountains. The vividness of this view includes mountains in the background and a cluster of trees on the west side of SR-79. The intactness and unity of this view are relatively low because of the presence of utility poles on the west side of SR-79.

The viewer group includes existing and future motorists on SR-79. The overall level of viewer exposure is moderate. The viewer sensitivity is moderate. Existing motorists travel through an area that is currently agricultural but will undergo substantial development in the next 20 to 30 years.

3.7.3 Environmental Consequences

3.7.3.1 Permanent Impacts

Build Alternatives

For all MCP Build Alternatives, long-term impacts would result from the permanent alteration of the visual environment through construction of the highway and associated bridges, interchange structures, retaining walls, and sound walls. As discussed in Chapter 2, bridges are provided at major crossings of water resources, natural resources, local roads, and railroads to provide access over the MCP project for vehicle, pedestrian, bicycle, equestrian, and wildlife uses. Appendix I, Attachments A and B provide the locations and details for each proposed bridge structure. All bridges will be designed to Caltrans standards and will be constructed with concrete. Their visual appearance will be similar to existing bridge structures along I-215 in the MCP study area. Preliminary retaining wall height and length information is provided in Table 2.3.B, and locations are shown in Figure 2.3.4. Section 3.15, Noise, discusses proposed locations and heights for sound barriers. Aesthetic treatments will be included during final design for these project features (retaining walls, sound walls, and bridge structures) to reduce potential visual impacts.

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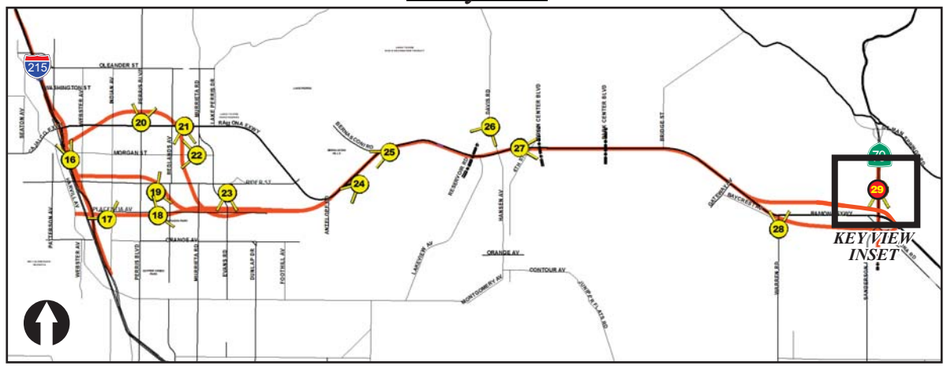
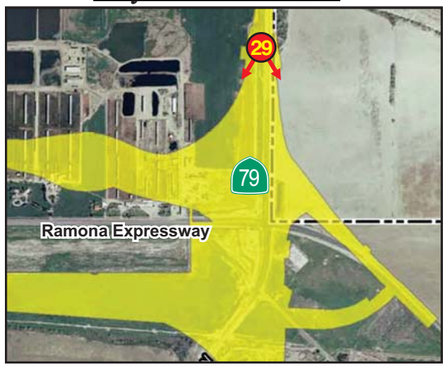
Study Area



Key View Location



Legend

- Key View Location
- Mid County Parkway Proposed Right of Way

Existing Conditions: State Route 79 looking south toward Ramona Expressway
Note: SR-79 will be constructed prior to MCP

Visual Simulation: All MCP Build Alternatives with the San Jacinto North Design Variation

Figure 3.7.16

Simulations: Softmirage, 2006

Mid County Parkway Visual Impact Assessment
Key View 29
08-RIV-MCP PM 0.0/16.3; 08-RIV-215 PM 28.0/34.3
EA 08-0F3200 (PN 0800000125)

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Landscaping will be implemented where existing landscaping is being removed during construction and/or where expanded right of way allows consistency with the MCP Corridor Master Plan that will be prepared for during final design.

Fencing would be installed along the right-of-way limits for the entire length of the MCP Build Alternatives. As discussed in Chapter 2, the height of the fencing will vary, with fencing in urban areas at 6 ft and in rural areas at 5 ft. The type of fencing may include, but is not limited to (1) chain link fencing in urban or developed areas; and (2) barbed wire and wire mesh in rural areas. The specific locations, and the fence types and heights will be finalized in consultation with Caltrans and the affected local jurisdictions.

Table 3.7.B provides the visual quality ratings of the key views for all MCP Build Alternatives, including points of view from the road and of those people with a view of the road. The overall visual quality rating (from 1 to 7 or very low to very high) is an average of the three criteria ratings (i.e., vividness, intactness, and unity). Each key view's existing visual quality rating provided in Table 3.7.B is based on the visual quality described in Section 3.7.2.7. The use of these evaluative criteria helps to establish an existing baseline to evaluate effects on visual quality.

Table 3.7.B Existing and Proposed Visual Quality

Key View	Existing Visual Quality				Proposed Visual Quality				Difference from Existing Visual Quality (P-E)
	Vividness (V)	Intactness (I)	Unity (U)	Existing (E) Visual Quality ([V+I+U]/3)	Vividness (V)	Intactness (I)	Unity (U)	Proposed (P) Visual Quality ([V+I+U]/3)	
16	2	2.5	2.5	2.3	2	2	2	2	**-0.3**
17	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2.3	**-0.7**
18	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	**0**
19	4	4	4	4	4	3.5	4	3.8	**-0.2**
20	3	2.5	3	2.8	2.5	1.5	3	2.3	**-0.5**
21	3	3	4	3.3	2.5	2	3	2.5	**-0.8**
22	4	3	4	3.6	2.5	2	2	2.2	**-1.4**
23b	3	3	3	3	3	2.5	3	2.8	**-0.2**
24	4	4	4	4	4	3.5	4	3.8	**-0.2**
25	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	3.7	**-0.3**
26	5	5	5	5	4.5	4	4.5	4.3	**-0.7**
27	3	3	3.5	3.2	2	2	3	2.3	**-0.9**
28	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	**-0.0**
29	3	3	2.5	2.8	2	1.5	2	1.8	**-1.0**

Source: *Visual Impact Assessment*, August 2011.
Rating Scale: 1.0–7.0 (1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = moderately low, 4 = moderate, 5 = moderately high, 6 = high, 7 = very high)
Note: Visual quality is evaluated by identifying the vividness, intactness, and unity present in the existing viewshed. The visual quality ratings identified above are an average of the vividness, intactness, and unity (i.e. [V+I+U]/3).

The future visual quality ratings are based on a visual simulation of what the views would look like with the MCP project. The change in overall visual character at project build out is the difference between the "Existing Visual Quality" rating and the "Future Visual Quality" rating. For example, if the overall existing visual quality rating was 6 and the proposed rating is 5, then the difference from existing would be -1.0. A negative number indicates an adverse visual impact to the existing visual setting. The greater the negative number the more substantial the visual impact (e.g., a -1.0 rating would have more visual impact than a -0.4).

The following is a detailed discussion of the proposed views for Key Views 16 through 29 with implementation of the MCP Build Alternatives:

Key Views

Key View 16

The view simulation for Key View 16 is shown in Figure 3.7.3 and represents conditions that would occur under Alternative 4 Modified. As shown in the visual simulation, the MCP/I-215 systems interchange would be visible from this key view, including the elevated ramps for the interchange. In addition, other improvements to I-215 as a result of the MCP project would be visible, including (1) the addition of one auxiliary lane between the MCP/I-215 systems interchange and the adjacent service interchange to the south to facilitate movement between the MCP and I-215, and (2) the addition of an operational/mixed-flow lane from Nuevo Road to Cajalco-Ramona Expressway (or Harley Knox Boulevard) to facilitate weaving on I-215.

The visual quality in Key View 16 would decrease in rating by -0.3 due to reduced intactness and unity as a result of the MCP/I-215 interchange structure and widening of I-215; however, the overall visual quality would remain low, similar to existing conditions, and the MCP project would not result in a substantial adverse impact to Key View 16.

Key View 17

The view simulation for Key View 17 is shown in Figure 3.7.4 and represents conditions under Alternative 9 Modified. As shown in the visual simulation, elevated road structures associated with the MCP/I-215 interchange for Alternative 9 Modified would be visible in this view from the school area, thus creating new encroachments on the intactness of the view. As a result, the visual quality rating would decrease by -0.7 to an overall visual quality rating of 2.3

(low) with implementation of the project. The level of adverse impact to the visual setting in Key View 17 under Alternative 9 Modified would be high because of the new structures and close proximity to a school. Overall visual quality would change from moderately low to low and, while viewers would have sporadic views of the MCP (i.e., daytime views during outdoor school activities), the viewer sensitivity is high.

Key View 18

The visual simulation for Key View 18 is shown in Figure 3.7.5 and represents conditions under Alternative 9 Modified. Key View 18 faces north-northwest toward Paragon Park from Spectacular Bid Street, and Chant Street in the city of Perris. The MCP is not visible from this view because the mainline is depressed below existing ground level beyond the park in the foreground; therefore, implementation of Alternative 9 Modified would not alter the view (as did the original Alternative 9, which removed several park elements), and the visual quality would not be adversely affected. The view's overall visual quality would be maintained as moderately high (rated 5.0).

Key View 19

The view simulation for Key View 19 is shown in Figure 3.7.6 and represents conditions under Alternative 5 Modified. As shown in the visual simulation, the proposed Redlands Avenue overcrossing structure over the MCP and associated fill would be visible from the residential area, creating a new encroachment on the intactness of the view. In addition, the cluster of homes, mobile homes, and trees in the middle-ground of the view would be removed. Therefore, while the visual quality rating would decrease slightly by -0.2 to an overall visual quality rating of 3.8 (moderate) with implementation of the project, the level of adverse impact to the visual setting in Key View 19 under Alternative 5 Modified would be high because of changes in a semirural setting, and viewer exposure and sensitivity are high.

Key View 20

The visual simulation for Key View 20 is shown in Figure 3.7.7 and represents conditions under Alternative 4 Modified, including construction of an interchange at Perris Boulevard and the MCP. As shown in the visual simulation, Perris Boulevard would cross under the MCP, and the interchange would require acquisition of parcels along Perris Boulevard. The project would alter the view substantially due to the fill material and overcrossing structure required to elevate

MCP over Perris Boulevard, thus reducing the vividness and intactness of the view. The resulting visual quality would decrease by -0.5 to a rating of 2.3. The level of the adverse visual impact to Key View 20 from Alternative 4 Modified would be low because, while the visual quality would decline, this change is not substantial (change is from moderately low to low), and the viewer sensitivity is low.

Key View 21

The visual simulation for Key View 21 is shown on Figure 3.7.8. The visual simulation shows Alternative 4 Modified with the elevated highway running along the west side of the channel for approximately 1.8 mi. The MCP project would alter the current view of the channel, and the new elevated structure would block the distant view of the mountains, reducing the visual quality. The elevated highway profile would create a dominant and distinct encroachment in the foreground, thus reducing the visual quality of this view by -0.8 to an overall visual quality of 2.5. This same reduction in visual quality would be experienced by the future residents of the houses under construction or proposed for development in this area.

The level of adverse visual impact of the proposed MCP project to Key View 21, or anywhere for motorists on the Ramona Expressway, would be low due to the short duration of the view. However, for the future residents that would live in this area prior to construction of the MCP project, those immediately adjacent to the MCP would experience a high level of adverse visual impact due to the elevated design of the facility.

Key View 22

The visual simulation for Key View 22 is shown on Figure 3.7.9. The visual simulation shows Alternative 4 Modified with the raised profile of the highway in the foreground that would remain bridged for approximately 1.8 mi. Implementation of the MCP project would partially block the distant view of the mountains and would shift the viewer's attention from a graded/disturbed landscape and the grassy areas of the park to a dominant manmade structure. The vividness, intactness, and unity of this landscape would decrease because of the manmade encroachments; therefore, the overall visual quality rating would decrease by -1.4 for this view.

The level of adverse visual impact of the proposed MCP project Alternative 4 Modified at Key View 22, or from any similar setting along the Perris Valley storm drain where there is adjacent residential land use, would be high due to a reduction in all of the visual rating criteria and high viewer sensitivity. The visual quality rating would change from moderate (3.6) to low (2.2).

Key View 23B

The visual simulation for Key View 23B is shown on Figure 3.7.10 and represents conditions under all the proposed MCP Build Alternatives. As shown in the visual simulation, the MCP project would require acquisition of land with residential uses and vegetation to allow for the new interchange and local road expansion. A new partial-diamond/partial-cloverleaf interchange would be constructed and a cul-de-sac would be constructed at Old Evans Road. Old Evans Road would be widened and paved, and the new highway and ramps would be elevated over the existing road.

As a result of these changes, the visual quality would decrease by -0.2; however, the visual quality would remain moderately low. Both residents and drivers would be subject to the adverse visual effects of the MCP project in this area. Therefore, the level of adverse visual impact would be moderate.

Key View 24

The visual simulation for Key View 24 is shown on Figure 3.7.11 and represents conditions under all the MCP Build Alternatives. As shown in the visual simulations, the cut slopes of the MCP through the McCanna Hills would be visible, but are not overwhelming due to the distance from the key view. Therefore, the MCP does not result in visual encroachments because it blends into the overall viewshed, and the proposed visual quality of this view remains almost the same as the existing setting, although the intactness of the view diminishes slightly.

The level of adverse visual impact at Key View 24 is low to moderate, related to the slight reduction in the intactness of the view resulting from the cuts through the McCanna Hills. The visual quality rating with implementation of the MCP project would be 3.8.

Key View 25

The visual simulation for Key View 25 is shown on Figure 3.7.12 and represents conditions under all the MCP Build Alternatives. As shown in the visual

simulation, the natural elements of the view remain unchanged with the exception of the visible structure in the right side of the visual simulation that would be part of the MCP/Bernasconi Road interchange. The overall composition of this view would still be harmonious and the landscape cohesive. However, the proposed visual quality of this view is slightly lower (-0.2) than the existing visual quality, due to the addition of the manmade encroachments. The level of adverse visual impact at Key View 25 would be moderate to high, due to high sensitivity for future residents and a reduction in visual quality with the introduction of the interchange structure into the viewshed.

Key View 26

The visual simulation for Key View 26 is shown in Figure 3.7.13 and represents conditions under all the Build Alternatives. As shown in the visual simulation, the MCP project would result in a lower visual quality rating due to the encroachment of the MCP into the middle-ground that removes some trees and partially blocks the view of the mountains in the background as a result of a raised profile. The unity of this view is only slightly reduced compared to the existing setting because all manmade elements associated with the MCP blend into the natural environment, thus maintaining its natural form and line. Therefore, the visual quality would decrease by -0.7, and the level of adverse visual impact would be moderate considering the reduction in the overall visual quality rating from 5.0 to 4.3 and the high viewer sensitivity of future residential land uses.

Key View 27

The visual simulation for Key View 27 is shown in Figure 3.7.14 and illustrates conditions under all the MCP Build Alternatives with the new Town Center Boulevard overcrossing and elevated on- and off-ramps. As shown in the visual simulation, the MCP project would partially block the view of the mountains and the residential areas in the background. The overall visual quality will be lower in rating due to the greater width of the MCP compared to the existing Ramona Expressway and the overcrossing, which is the dominant manmade structure in the foreground. The unity of the view is slightly reduced because the overcrossing blends with the hills and mountains. Therefore, the level of adverse visual impact is moderate due primarily to a much wider highway facility than what exists today, as well as the introduction of a new structure into the viewshed. The overall visual quality rating declines from 3.2 to 2.3 (low).

Key View 28

The visual simulation for Key View 28 is shown in Figure 3.7.15. The visual simulation shows all the MCP Build Alternatives. An interchange would be constructed at MCP and Warren Road, north of the Ramona Expressway. Implementation of the project would change Key View 28 very little. Viewers would see an increase in traffic activity because of the new MCP. The proposed visual quality would remain the same as the existing visual quality with a rating of 2.0. The County of Riverside's General Plan designates this area for light industrial and agricultural land uses. Therefore, the level of the adverse visual impact from the project would be nominal because of minimal change to the visual quality, low viewer exposure and sensitivity, and a minimal change to the visual character.

Key View 29

The visual simulation for Key View 29 is shown in Figure 3.7.16. The visual simulation shows all the MCP Build Alternatives with the San Jacinto North Design Variation (SJN DV), including the MCP/SR-79 system interchange. The MCP project would block the distant view of the mountains and require removal of the tree cluster on the side of SR-79 and acquisition of right of way to allow for project construction. The proposed visual quality will be lower in rating due to the dominance of the interchange structures in the foreground and the wider highway. Also, commercial, light industrial, and conservation land uses are designated for this area in the County's General Plan. The level of adverse visual impact at Key View 29 would be high due to the introduction of a system interchange that will be approximately 50 ft high.

Light, Glare, Shade, and Shadow

Existing urban and suburban areas within the MCP study area receive light at night from traffic, street lighting, and lighted parking lots; signalization at street intersections and freeway on- and off-ramps; commercial zones; and limited light sources from residential development. Existing lighting on existing streets and freeways would be modified or relocated as a part of the MCP project. Safety lighting would also be provided along the MCP in existing developed areas and at interchanges.

Light and glare would increase as a result of safety lighting along the MCP in those areas that are currently undeveloped, agricultural, or are rural in character. Specifically, all MCP Build Alternatives would increase light and glare in the

rural/agricultural areas between the McCanna Hills and SR-79. To minimize this effect, no lighting fixtures would be provided along the highway alignment, with the exception of safety lighting provided only at the service interchanges. To minimize light spill into adjoining areas, light fixtures required for safety would be designed with hoods that would direct light downward to only those areas requiring illumination for safety purposes.

In addition, the MCP study area would experience an increase in lighting from nighttime traffic along the facility. Glare from headlights would be visible from land uses directly adjacent to the MCP. Glare from nighttime traffic would also contribute to a reduction in darkness of the night sky in the MCP study area.

The MCP project is located within Zone B of the Mount Palomar Nighttime Lighting Policy Area. According to County of Riverside Ordinance No. 655, Section I, Zone B is defined as the area within a 45 mi radius of Palomar Observatory and Zone A is defined as the area within a 15 mi radius of Palomar Observatory. All the MCP Build Alternatives would introduce new sources of light that would have the potential to impact the Palomar Observatory. Adherence to County of Riverside Ordinance No. 655, Regulating Light Pollution for Zone B, would be required for all the MCP Build Alternatives. Project compliance with Ordinance No. 655 would minimize potential adverse impacts to the nighttime use of the Palomar Observatory.

All MCP Build Alternatives would create new sources of shadow and shade associated with fill slopes, bridges, and other structures. These shade and shadow effects are considered minimal because very few, if any, sensitive viewers would be within the new shade or shadow footprints.

Summary of Visual Impacts for All Build Alternatives

All of the MCP Build Alternatives would result in long-term adverse visual impacts that would result from the permanent alteration of the visual environment through construction of the highway and associated bridges, interchange structures, retaining walls, and sound walls. The MCP Build Alternatives would not have a substantial impact to rock outcroppings because the alignments are located through primarily relatively flat areas and are south of Bernasconi Hills and the Lakeview Mountains, which are identified to include distinct rock outcroppings in the Lakeview Nuevo Area Plan of the Riverside County General Plan. As noted in the discussions above for Key Views 16 through 29, visual impacts of the MCP Build Alternatives include changes to the visual character of many areas (particularly areas that are rural,

agricultural, residential, or undeveloped) and blocking views of existing viewer groups in other locations. The following section summarizes the visual impacts under each MCP Build Alternative.

Alternative 4 Modified

Based on the analysis of Key Views 16 through 29 presented above, the visual impacts of Alternative 4 Modified can be summarized as follows:

- In the north Perris area, the MCP would traverse existing agricultural lands, as well as encroach upon some residential and commercial land uses. As shown in the visual simulations in Key Views 16 and 20, the MCP will add a major transportation facility in an area that is rapidly developing; therefore, the visual character would not change that much for affected viewer groups (motorists and some residents). The MCP/I-215 systems interchange would introduce a major multi-level structure.
- The level of adverse visual impact of the Alternative 4 Modified at Key View 22, or from any similar setting along the Perris Valley storm drain where there is adjacent residential land use, would be high due to a reduction in all of the visual rating criteria.
- As shown in the visual simulations in Key Views 21 and 22, some of the most substantial visual impacts occur along Alternative 4 Modified, where the MCP would be constructed on an elevated structure almost 1.8 mi long that would be visible to park users at Morgan Street Park and existing and future residents of this developing residential area in the city of Perris.
- Where improvements follow closely along Ramona Expressway (area common to all MCP Build Alternatives, including Alternative 4 Modified), the visual effects of the MCP will be experienced by a relatively small number of existing motorists, residents, and farm workers. However, as this area continues to develop, an increasing number of residents would be exposed to views of the highway. This portion of the alignment requires a cut section through the McCanna Hills (see the visual simulation for Key View 24).
- As shown in the visual simulations for Key Views 25 through 27, the primary visual effect of the MCP is the introduction of a major transportation facility (including local service interchanges) into an existing agricultural area. As this area continues to develop, an increasing number of residents would be exposed to views of the highway.
- At its eastern terminus with SR-79, the primary visual impact of all the MCP Build Alternatives, including Alternative 4 Modified, is associated with the

multi-level MCP/SR-79 systems interchange structure, as seen in the visual simulation in Key View 29. The affected viewer groups would be motorists and a few scattered residences and businesses in the vicinity of the proposed interchange.

- Key View 29 shows a visual simulation of Alternative 4 Modified with the SJN DV. Visual effects resulting from the southerly alignment (base case) would be similar to those of all the MCP Build Alternatives with the SJN DV due to the similarity of visual character and affected viewer groups in the area.

Alternative 5 Modified

The visual impacts of Alternative 5 Modified are similar to those described above for Alternative 4 Modified, except for the connection to the I-215 and improvements through the city of Perris. The visual impacts associated with these areas are described below.

- Alternative 5 Modified is located in the city of Perris along Rider Street and would impact the visual environment by introducing a major transportation facility into the landscape where none was previously planned. As with Alternative 4 Modified, the MCP/I-215 systems interchange would introduce a major multi-level structure; however, under Alternative 5 Modified this interchange would be located at Rider Street. Because the land uses in the area near the interchange are primarily commercial industrial, there are a limited number of sensitive viewers in this area.
- Through the city of Perris, the proposed service interchange at Perris Boulevard introduces a structure that may impact the views of some residents in the immediate vicinity of the interchange. Sensitive viewers in this area include existing and future residents, particularly in the eastern portion of this city.

Alternative 9 Modified

The visual impacts of Alternative 9 Modified are similar to those described above for Alternatives 4 Modified and 5 Modified, except for the connection to the I-215 and the improvements through the city of Perris. The visual impacts associated with these areas are described below.

- Alternative 9 Modified is located in the city of Perris along Placentia Avenue and would impact the visual environment by introducing a major transportation facility into the landscape where none was previously planned.

As with Alternatives 4 Modified and 5 Modified, the MCP/I-215 systems interchange would introduce a major multi-level structure; however, under Alternative 9 Modified this interchange would be located at Placentia Avenue.

- As shown in the visual simulation of Key View 18, much of the MCP would not be visible because it would be constructed below existing ground level between Evans Road and I-215. However, the proposed service interchange at Redlands Avenue introduces a structure that may impact the views of some residents in the immediate vicinity of that interchange.

No Build Alternatives

Alternative 1A (No Project/No Action Existing Ground Conditions)

Alternative 1A would not change the existing visual setting and would, therefore, not create visual impacts in the MCP study area.

Alternative 1B (No Project/No Action General Plan Circulation Element Conditions)

Alternative 1B is also a No Action Alternative in that the MCP would not be constructed, but Ramona Expressway would be constructed to the ultimate width and alignment as shown in the Riverside County General Plan. The widening of Ramona Expressway between I-215 and SR-79 would include some removal of agricultural land but would not include the construction of any interchange structures in this area.

3.7.3.2 Temporary Impacts

Build Alternatives

Short-term visual impacts would occur to sensitive viewers during the construction period, and include views of demolition of existing structures, clearing of existing vegetation, grading of cut-and-fill slopes, construction of the MCP roadway and structures, construction vehicles, and construction staging areas. In addition, construction activities may be required at nighttime, early evening, or early morning to minimize impacts to traffic on existing facilties, such as I-215, and lighting would be required to facilitate a safe work environment in such conditions. Should construction activities occur at nighttime, early evening, or early morning and lighting is required, lighting will be properly located and directed within the construction area to minimize light shining off site during those nighttime construction activities. Construction activities are temporary, and the adverse visual impacts related to construction activity would cease after completion of construction. The effects of vegetation clearing would gradually cease over time as landscaping for the MCP project matures.

No Build Alternatives

Alternative 1A (No Project/No Action Existing Ground Conditions)

Under Alternative 1A, there would be no construction. Therefore, there would be no temporary impact from construction and no temporary visual impacts to the MCP study area. No mitigation is required.

Alternative 1B (No Project/No Action General Plan Circulation Element Conditions)

Alternative 1B is also a No Action Alternative in that the MCP would not be constructed. However, Ramona Expressway would be constructed to the ultimate width and alignment as shown in the Riverside County General Plan, and the planned street network would be developed according to the Circulation Element of the General Plan. Alternative 1B would result in temporary impacts during construction activities for widening Ramona Expressway between the I-215 and the SR-79 and implementing planned street improvements.

3.7.4 Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

As discussed above, the MCP project would result in impacts to scenic vistas and scenic resources, degradation to the existing visual character and quality in the project area, and the creation of new sources of light and glare. Mitigation measures have been identified and are described below to avoid, minimize, or reduce the adverse visual impacts that may result from the construction and operation of the MCP project. While these measures will reduce the impacts of the MCP project, there will still be a residual visual impact due to the introduction of a major new highway into the visual landscape of the MCP study area. These measures would apply to all MCP Build Alternatives.

VIS-1 **Construction Plan.** To keep construction and staging activities within the project right of way and to minimize views of construction access and staging areas, prior to the initiation of construction, the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) Project Engineer will require the Construction Contractor to document the locations of construction and staging areas within the disturbance footprint for the selected Mid County Parkway (MCP) Build Alternatives or within other public rights of way as approved by the local jurisdictions where those rights of way are located.

During construction, the RCTC Project Engineer will require the Construction Contractor to construct the project in accordance with California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Standard Construction Specifications, including measures included in those Specifications to address visual impacts during construction.

VIS-2 **Construction Lighting.** If construction work must be done at night, early evening, and/or early morning and lighting is required, RCTC's Project Engineer will require the Construction Contractor to properly locate and direct lighting within the construction area to minimize light shining off site during those nighttime construction activities.

VIS-3 **MCP Corridor Master Plan.** During final design, the RCTC Project Manager will have the *MCP Corridor Master Plan* (Master Plan) prepared. The Master Plan will include a design template for aesthetic features for structures throughout the MCP corridor. The purpose of the Master Plan is to create consistency in aesthetic design throughout the length of the MCP corridor. The aesthetic and design features described in Measure VIS-4 will be incorporated in the Master Plan. In addition, the Master Plan will be developed in conjunction with the *MCP Landscape Plan* described in Measure VIS-5.

The RCTC Project Manager will coordinate the preparation of the Master Plan with the County of Riverside (County) and the cities in which the project is located, and with Caltrans in the context-sensitive design process for the Master Plan.

During final design, the RCTC Project Manager will incorporate the Master Plan in the project specifications.

During construction, the RCTC Project Engineer will require the Construction Contractor to implement the Master Plan in the construction of the project hardscape and landscape features.

VIS-4 **Structural and Hardscape Elements.** To address the adverse visual impacts of project structures, the RCTC Project Engineer will ensure that the final project design incorporates the mitigation and minimization elements A–D, below, and that these enhancements to structures are incorporated in the design and construction of sound

walls, retaining walls, and bridge elements. The design of these aesthetic features will be based on the Master Plan described in Measure VIS-3.

During construction, RCTC's Project Engineer will ensure that the Construction Contractor constructs the retaining and sound walls, medians, bridges, and other structures and hardscape consistent with aesthetic and design features in the project specifications including the Master Plan.

A. Sound walls will include attractive, decorative elements such as local art or local or historical references incorporated into the wall design to reduce visual impacts to community character, increase the visual quality of the area, and provide an expression of the local and/or regional "sense of place." Areas in front of sound walls (the side facing away from the freeway) will be landscaped, where landscaping can be accommodated within the public right of way, including trees, shrubs, and vines (depending on the available space), to break the visual monotony, soften the appearance of soundwalls, and deter graffiti.

B. Retaining walls (including walls associated with bridge structures) will be heavily textured (i.e., split-face or fractured rib) to minimize glare and visual mass. Retaining walls facing public use areas (parks, streets, etc.) over 9 feet (ft) high will be heavily textured (i.e., split-face or fractured rib) and include site-specific aesthetic features (local or historical references). Color (integral or applied) is not required for retaining walls.

C. In addition to texture and color as described in A and B, above, sound walls and retaining walls with low-density development or recreational viewer groups will include planting of trees or trees and shrubs at the base of the walls (non-motorist side) to minimize loss of visual unity. Plantings will be local native species or ornamental species that may require permanent irrigation after establishment consistent with the *MCP Landscape Plan*.

D. Slope paving in all areas with bicyclist and pedestrian viewers will include texture (i.e., stamped slate). In urban areas, slope paving will incorporate site-specific aesthetic features in addition to texture. Texture and pattern will be used to minimize the visual impacts of increased hard surface, and reinforce community identify, offsetting reduced community connectivity associated with increased bridge widths.

In addition to the design elements noted above, the RCTC Project Engineer will ensure that the designs of sound walls comply with the Caltrans standards for sound attenuation (where walls provide that function), safety requirements, and with the Caltrans *Highway Design Manual* standards.

The RCTC Project Engineer will request the Caltrans District 8 Landscape Architect to review and approve the final design of any sound walls within state highway right of way.

VIS-5 **MCP Landscape Plan.** During final design, the RCTC Project Manager will contract with a licensed landscape architect to prepare the *MCP Landscape Plan*. The purpose of the *MCP Landscape Plan* is to create consistency in the landscaping and softscape project features throughout the length of the MCP corridor. The *MCP Landscape Plan* will be developed in conjunction with the Master Plan described in Measure VIS-3, and landscaping will be in compliance with the Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) Urban/Wildlands Interface Guidelines.

The RCTC Project Manager will coordinate the preparation of the plan with the County and the cities in which the project is located, and with Caltrans.

The RCTC Project Manager will submit the *MCP Landscape Plan* for review and approval by the Caltrans District 8 Landscape Architect for the parts of the *MCP Landscape Plan* applicable to state highway right of way.

The RCTC Project Manager will incorporate the *MCP Landscape Plan* in the project specifications.

The *MCP Landscape Plan* will include the following components:

- Applicable procedures and requirements detailed in the Caltrans *Highway Design Manual*, Section 902.1, Planting Guidelines (September 2006), and any applicable local agency General Plan.

- Identification of areas within the project limits for revegetation, including landscaping for graded areas with plant species consistent with adjacent vegetation and enhancement of new project structures (ramps, sound walls, and retaining walls).

- Identification of trees and shrubs and their locations for planting along the MCP corridor and at interchanges to enhance the existing visual planting character of the area.

- Identification of drought-resistant plants and their locations for planting along the MCP corridor; the plant materials will be consistent with Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (Metropolitan) guidelines, which promote the use of xeric (adapted to arid conditions) landscaping techniques. The irrigation design and implementation practices will conform to the water conservation measures established in Assembly Bill 325, the Water Conservation in Landscaping Act of 1990 (in effect January 1, 1993). The identified plant materials will also be durable in relation to urban pollutants, such as smog.

- Identification of soil erosion control plant materials (groundcover, native grasses, and wildflowers) and the embankments and steeper slopes where those plant materials would be planted.

- Identification of plant materials, which are not highly sensitive to shadow and shade, and their locations for planting along the walls of the MCP corridor.

- Confirmation that all plantings will be drought-resistant and, where applicable, shadow-resistant to ensure plant longevity and the sustainable use of water resources.

- Identification of locations along the MCP corridor where slope rounding and contour grading would be incorporated to minimize the appearance of slopes and visually soften grade changes in those areas.

During final design, the RCTC Project Manager will incorporate the *MCP Landscape Plan* in the project specifications.

During construction, the RCTC Project Engineer will require the construction contractor to implement the *MCP Landscape Plan* in the construction of the project landscape features.

Replacement planning will include no less than 3 years of plant establishment.

VIS-6 **Trees.** During final design, the RCTC Project Engineer will minimize the removal of existing mature trees when it can be accommodated without compromising the design of the project facilities, or the safety of construction workers or future travelers on the project facilities.

The RCTC Project Engineer will ensure that the project plans identify mature trees that will not be removed during construction.

During construction, the RCTC Project Engineer will require the Construction Contractor to avoid removal of mature trees as noted on the project plans. Any requests from the construction contractor to remove trees shown on the project plans as not to be removed must be approved in writing by the RCTC Project Engineer.

For any removal of mature trees within State highway right of way, the RCTC Project Engineer will incorporate additional landscape improvements into the final project design at a replacement ratio to be determined by the Caltrans District 8 Landscape Architect.

VIS-7 **Lighting.** During final design, the RCTC Project Engineer will prepare a facility lighting plan. The lighting plan will include the following:

Specifications for lighting fixtures designed to minimize glare and light on adjacent properties and into the night sky.

Specifications for nonglare hoods to focus light within the MCP project or local jurisdictions' road rights of way.

Compliance with the County of Riverside Ordinance No. 655, Regulating Light Pollution for Zone B, including installation of low pressure sodium street lights on private roadways and streets.

The RCTC Project Engineer will submit the lighting plan to the Caltrans District 8 for areas under State jurisdiction and for approval by the County or the affected cities for areas within their jurisdictions.

The RCTC Project Engineer will incorporate the lighting plan in the final design and project specifications.

The RCTC Project Engineer will require the Construction Contractor to install light fixtures consistent with the lighting plan.